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Gentlemen of the Society

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Gentlemen of the Society

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Transcriber: Jennifer Neal and Elicia Kaiser, November 29, 2009

Gentlemen of the Society-

It may strike some as strange that one not a farmer should venture to say anything at a time when the subject should pertain to agriculture or he changes all with unfitnes.

And yet when we consider that our fundamental aims + purposes ought to be the same through whatever channel our daily activity flows, that whatever road we travel, we all have a common goal and destination. There must be something in common to us all about which we can talk to each other intelligently, + thus this sympathy leads to observation + study of each other's pursuits so that we each know something of others hardships. This would be the case even if the labors of the community were so graded & classified that each for the sake of economy of labor was confined to a special avocation.

This ought to be so no man should become so blind & merely mechanical a thing as to be ignorant of the relative value and importance of his labor in machinery of the state he should know his function in the body-politic + in order to this he must have reflected somewhat upon society + know what goes to make it up. What the machinery consists of [illegible text] his part. He must know what other functions & organs there are besides his own. So that a farmer or a lawyer in order to properly understand each his own sphere must also understand the sphere of others. And an intelligent man in either profession will do this + in preparation as he thus understands the structure of society will cease to have a narrow + exclusive feeling [ignorant?] to his own + will respect all other pursuits that are seen essential to the public. + will in a certain sense be an honorary member of each.

In such a sense I might perhaps hope to be included among farmers and be invited to speak among them + especially if I ventured no farther into the mysteries of the profession than to speak of its relative position among the various human employments.

From earth we spring--Earth is our Mother. Where we found on the far most plains + Steppes of Asia along the fortifying Niles in the valleys + on the hillsides of Europe or in our mother Continent: embracing all varieties of habitable land. [Man?] aboriginal keeps close to the bark of mother Earth + draws his ~~nourishment~~ support like a child from her nourishing bosom. Through his flocks that graze [illegible text] pastures, or by hilltops of the soil he gets directly the supply of all his wants. The fleece & hide of the slaughtered hunts give him clothing. He feeds upon their flesh while the herd or root or grains give him food also. He lies beneath the outstretched shade of broad armed trees or makes better shelter of their down felled trunks.

[illegible text] with the friction of society men of imagination know how clothed this life in colors that makes it attractive to all who are in life in a similar way, + who of us are not. Who have not felt the desirableness of the independence + freedoms of the Arcadian life. To milk our cows, & under this shade of the oak in the solitude deprived of loneliness by a dear companion + prattling loving children to eat the fruits, that hours and unbough toil has more.

Such aims of life if they are simply designed to illustrate the play of human sympathy, feeling under circumstances favorable are [illegible text] maybe, but if they are to paint a desirable condition for man they are false. No such condition does [illegible text] in fact exist. The Arcadian shepherd and shepherdess are in fact little better than our Indian huntsman and his squaw, + the rural + picturesque

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[illegible text] when this man dwells in solitude with only one to whom to [illegible text] solitude is [illegible text] proves in fact to be a filthy [illegible text] filled with fleas [illegible text] that would have driven Adam from Paradise if he had not sinned.

His primal condition is not farming. It is only the condition in which the infant man exists until a little maturing marks him to put forth his energies + and his social tendencies develop themselves. In organized society farming has its place beside other employments as are of the means of meeting the wants of all society.

It is not the entirely independent pursuit which imagination may permit. It will not furnish to man all that is useful for living. It performs our part, while another pursuit performs another part of that which society as a whole requires. And this grows not out of the demand of those who are not farmers but from the necessities of all, farmers included. The demands of the several members of society are various. They cannot be met by each for himself + as the wants of the several individuals of society increases with the increase of intelligences + culture the need of assistance + cooperation increases also.

A division of labor is not [illegible text] upon society but the need of cooperation in life's aims + pursuits precipitates society. If man never needed anything but what by toil he could raise on his plot of land or get by a nomad life, society would not exist.

Wherein there is whatever state farming is pursued properly it will be as the [avocation?] of our class of men to furnish to the rest who are in return working for them. What all the rest need get in such a way as not to defeat the end of individual life or prevent the farmer from using what the rest supply for his profit.

Farming will be characterized in the following way-

1st + foremost farmers will be striving to secure for themselves the [best] improvement of mind + heart. They will studiously cultivate their minds + the minds of their children. They will wish to see [task?]+ comfort displayed in all improvements. For we take it for granted that the aim could not be so low as were bodily comfort & luxury.

2nd + as a means to the proper work of the farm he will seek all the best methods of accomplishing the work of the farm. In stock-raising he will seek the varieties most profitable for labor for food or for the dairy or for wool.

He will seek labor saving machinery for he can thus accomplish the same in less time + have more for other pursuits. He will use economy in the cultivation of his land not wasting its productivity + will increase it by all proper manners.

In a vow he will seek his highest good by becoming a member of society in which while he does farming he shall enjoy the labors of others in turn.

But let us look at a country where the business of farming has such a relation to society as I suppose.

The farmers will have the same high purpose in life that other men have. They will labor as all other men labor. This work will not be esteemed disgraceful + fit only for the slave. In such a society all labor will be honorable + labeling idleness a disgrace. In such a society the farmers as a class will be as

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well educated as any other class of citizens. They will not consent to become, while performing our portion of the work of society to be behind in all honorable + noble qualities of intelligence + refinement than of another class whose labors are only another fraction of the labor of all. With his coat off + at the plough he will be the thorough going working man in society or in public he will be the well informed courteous cultivated man. Thank God. This picture is [illegible text] in our land although nowhere else on earth. A man pursuing as his avocation the tilling of the soil, the rearing of the stock, + yet at the same time an accomplished gentlemen kind, well informed [illegible text].

You may go through whole countries of some states of our union + find the average character + intelligence of the farmers not just land at proprietors but the small farmers allow [that?] of the aristocracy of Europe or that of the ~~boasted gentry of the~~ villainous gentry of the seceded states who look in contempt upon labor as fit only for the negro + the slave.

In such a country you will see in all the appliances of cultivation showing that farmers aim at their highest will bring in bring farmers + are not mere clod-hoppers + serfs of the soil. You will in the church where by inflicting on the grandest themes men get the greatest mental enlargement you will see the school house nestling in the shade by natural habitat on fair sites—where a thorough + continuous education is furnished free to all, you will find newspapers of fairness + ability in every family—which by these advertisements continually remind of the mutual dependence of all members of society + furnishes the intelligence in regard to public matters which will make the worker to mark out the path of duty as a citizen.

All the internal arrangements of the farmhouses in such a community will [bespeak] the refinement the taste of the individual books will show reading—and many appliances for saving labor will indicate that time is valued + that the Yankee [intru?] of calculation about the best + sufficient + cheapest way of doing everything is constantly employed.

The farm house itself will look as if not put up for a day but as if the inhabitant expected that the public might have some use for it after he was gone. His house peeks from amid foliage surrounded by his garden and his yard where amid the cultivation of the vegetable for food the refinement of feeling + a love of the beautiful which always accompany cultivation will be displayed in the variegated bloom of the flower-buds. The frames are substantial tight + bull strong not tumble down affairs. With the gates leaning over as if bracing themselves to permit the ingress of a guest. The arrangement of the farms + the yard display a [illegible text] + an order that seems to the unprofessional eye are not fanciful but of practical utility: that steps have been calculated + all out buildings, gates + bars so disposed that the work to be daily preformed about them should be expedited as much as possible. I have some farms + yards + houses so [disposed?] that a man at the least calculation would have to travel ten miles a year more than he need to have done. I should be safe in saying 100 instead of ten.

Another observable feature in such a farming district is that the houses are made in public highway + not remote from the latter for the sake of need as are often in them here for it is important that the hauling of produce from the farm ought in a well managed farm to far exceed the need [illegible text] for [illegible text]. Another characteristic will be the ~~intelligent display~~ intelligent

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application of the experience of others + general principles in the caring for the health + comfort of animals—because a healthy and comfortable animal will be far more serviceable than otherwise + in the arrangements for saving and distributing manners. In such farming communities all the provisions for saving labor by expediting it will be appreciated + employed. The reaper [illegible text] the best plough, cultivators, planters, ditching machines + in fact anything that will prove economical will be employed. And above all of these will be evidence in the tidings of many things + the way in which the work is kept up of a [illegible text] vigilance + activity that does in the day work of the day and does well whatever is done.

In a community where farming is the profession of farming as I spoke of it there is one very noticeable feature that the home of the farmer while you will see about indications of his profession is not essentially different from the home of the [illegible text] the doctor or the carpenter or the blacksmith ~~community~~ division of labor + ~~the subordination of all~~ in order to let best good of each [illegible text] enables each to rise & attain an education that is about the same for all, & the farmer has as [illegible text], in as much refinement + comfort as men of other professions.

But what a contrast to this picture is that when those normally farmers have no participation with other professions + trades in securing common blessings + eliminating the general burden of toil instead of farming we have the savage state + in proportion as this professional character of farming disappears we have an approach to the savage state. Look at the condition of society in the rebel states where the tilling of the soil is aimless & purposeless except to escape the [illegible text] or the lash.

When the farmers do not have a right in the land they land the till and when there is no sharing or allotment of labor among the various classes but all labor and this excessive way often goes to build up + pamper the lord. Look to Europe where there is in various ways a division of the reward of labor from those to whom it properly belongs. In Carolina there are none of the indications of comfortable homes for the laborers where there is culture and refinement there are no indications that judgment is used except as it is enforced. In a [illegible text] there is no society. In Europe as the condition of the laborer is higher. The indications [compound, the humble cottage of the English peasant will perhaps show a Bible. There may be some taste some comfort, but everything] is an imperfect condition.

Except where farmers are an element of society aiming by devoting themselves to the farm while others devote themselves to the shop the manufacturing or the country they cannot attain nor can any other considerable portion of community attain a high position in intelligence + in all manly qualities. They will be as all other members of society always serfs savages.

Now it is evident that the essential thing in order to make farming such as I have described it is intelligence. Intelligence has to propose the need in life + intelligence is all along [requisite?] to attain this and an intelligent farmer cannot perform his avocation without such loss of time + strength as to defeat his aim. We have here given us by God through our ancestry such a form of organized society that I have alluded to. With us labor is most honorable + we receive from other portions of society the utensils and the machinery that makes us to perform it quicker + better we have a soil and climate that makes farming

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pleasant + healthful. Shall we intelligently + earnestly strive to perfect our farming + advance society or shall we by negligence + shiftlessness let our advantages slip.

In Oregon or rather perhaps we should say in the Columbia River Valley, we have a great region of vast resources + various productivity fitted for various pursuits + requiring for its proper development a population who apportioning among them the various kinds of toil may make it capable of sustaining a vast population while it would furnish but a comparatively limited field for any other kind of labor.

But while some mine, others raise stock, + others still are employed in the various kinds of manufactures which all need or some need, and others still are as merchants concerned in the exchange of various products, its different capabilities will be developed. Twofold population be sustained + far greater advantages accrue to each because of this variety of production + of labor.

May we not hope to see a grand [illegible text] of society here also which shall aim not merely at division of labor for the sake of bringing out the material resources of the country, but for the sake of making any individual in community to attain the most for himself of true improvement and culture. We are [accustomed?] to contemplate with enthusiasm the resources of our country + talk about developing them as if this were the end and all human form and thought were to be expanded in determining how much can be done with inanimate nature, while in truth these resources are valuable only because furnishing the material which the industry of man can employ so as to assume the surrogate labors of man + give greater leisure for the pursuit of higher things, art and knowledge. May we not hope to see along with the growth of manufactures the increase of shops + the employment of commoner + improvement in the ways + means of agriculture evidence that all this systemizing of labor is to be in order to the highest and best interests of society. That it is not to be from our increases of matter to be expanded in luxuries + in an immaterial refinement – for those in the [illegible text] society but for the building up of society in the intelligence + [illegible text].

Upon farmers especially as the most stable class in community + as the most uplifting class, for these pursuits favor thought, [illegible text] a special responsibility in this matter. While you are in such assemblages as these comparing your several ways of accomplishing the more immediate lessons of your profession, do not forget here + [illegible text] that this strictly professional work is only instrumental or ought to be only instrumental to the higher interests of your families + society.

While here engaged thus let us remember that it is equally a duty here + used when to think + act about the great spiritual + intellectual interests of society.

It should be our pride to participate in building up all that looks to the nurture + education of the young + especially that this can for our great + beneficent system of common schools [illegible text] perhaps more upon the farmer than any others.

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